AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-14 (cancelled).

15. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for loading a material into a storage area of a vehicle sized to transport material, said vehicle having a rear end and a chassis that includes said storage area, said chassis being supported by at least a pair of opposite wheel structures for movement on a support surface, each of said wheel structures having a rim with a tire mounted thereto, said rims having a top and a bottom, said storage area having a portion with a bottom positioned at a height above said support surface and at about the top of said rims, said portion having a lower edge, said apparatus comprising:

a chute extending from the rear end of said vehicle and extending substantially the width of said vehicle, said chute having a slide surface with a top edge positioned proximate said lower edge of said portion, said slide surface extending away from said lower edge downwardly toward a bottom edge of said chute spaced from said support surface to be at or below the rims of said wheel structures and below said top edge of said chute;

a receiving member that is substantially planar with a contoured surface with a front edge attached to said bottom edge of said chute and with a rear edge spaced from said front edge a distance to define a loading area having opposite sides, said rear edge and said opposite sides being configured for loading said material onto said

loading area along said rear edge and said opposite sides, and said opposite sides and said rear edge being configured with a side rim to retain said material in said loading area;

a connector arrangement for pivotally connecting said chute to a rear support member of said vehicle proximate said lower edge; and,

operation means for moving said apparatus between a deployed position in which said apparatus extends away from said bottom with said receiving member disposed generally above and generally in alignment with said support surface and disposed below said lower edge of said portion and a transfer position in which said receiving member is raised sufficiently for the transfer of said material placed on said loading area onto said slide surface and toward said chute and toward said bottom.

16. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said side rim of said opposite sides further comprises at least two side walls connected to and extending upward from said receiving member and configured to retain said material in said loading area and to guide material deposited on said loading area towards said chute when said apparatus is moved from said deployed position to said transfer position.

17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 16, wherein said side walls have a height above said receiving member of no greater than about 6 inches.

18. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said side rim of said rear edge further comprises a retaining wall connected to and extending upward from said

rear edge of the receiving member, and configured to retain said material in said loading area.

19. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said retaining wall has a height above said receiving member of no greater than about 6 inches.

20. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, further comprising at least two side walls connected to and extending upwardly from said chute, wherein said side walls connected to said chute are configured to guide material from said loading area towards said storage area when said apparatus is in said transfer position.

21. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said loading area is ~~a planar platform~~ disposed essentially horizontally above said support surface when the apparatus is in said deployed position.

22. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said receiving member makes no contact with said support surface.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said receiving member and said chute are joined at an angle of greater than 90 degrees and less than 180 degrees.

24. (Currently Amended) For use with a vehicle having a storage area for transporting material, said vehicle having a rear end and including at least a pair of opposite wheel structures for movement on a support surface, each of said wheel structures having a rim with a tire mounted thereto, said rim having a top and bottom, said storage area having a portion with a bottom positioned at a height above said support surface and at about the top of said rims, said portion having a lower edge, an apparatus for loading a material into said storage area comprising:

a chute extending from the rear end of said vehicle and extending substantially the width of said vehicle, said chute having a slide surface with a top edge positioned proximate the lower edge of said portion, said slide surface extending away from said lower edge downwardly toward a bottom edge of said chute spaced from said support surface to be at or below the rims of the wheel structures and below said top edge of said chute;

a receiving member having a front edge attached to said bottom edge of said chute, ~~and~~ a rear edge spaced from said front edge a distance to define a loading area, and side walls connected to and extending upward from said receiving member configured to retain said material thereon and guide said material deposited on said loading area towards said chute when said apparatus is moved from a first position to a second position, wherein said side walls extend about said loading area and have a height selected to retain said material in said loading area but less than about the top of said rim of said tire;

a connector arrangement for pivotally connecting said chute to a rear support member of said vehicle proximate said lower edge; and

operation means for moving said apparatus between ~~a~~ said first position in which said apparatus extends away from said bottom with said receiving member disposed below said lower edge of said portion and above said support surface and ~~a~~ said second position in which said loading area is raised sufficiently for the transfer of said material placed on said loading area onto said slide surface and toward said chute and toward said bottom.

25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 25, wherein said side walls have a height above said receiving member of no greater than about 6 inches.

27. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising a retaining wall connected to and extending upward from said rear edge of said receiving member, ~~and configured to retain said material on said loading area~~wherein said retaining wall has a height selected to retain said material in said loading area but less than about the top of said rim of said tire.

28. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 27, wherein said retaining wall has a height above said receiving member of no greater than about 6 inches.

29. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising at least two side walls connected to and extending upwardly from said chute, wherein said side walls connected to said chute are configured to guide material from said loading area towards said storage area when said apparatus is in said second position.

30. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said loading area is a substantially planar platform disposed essentially horizontally above said support surface when the apparatus is in said first position.

31. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein said receiving member makes no contact with said support surface.

32. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said receiving member and said chute are joined at an angle of greater than 90 degrees and less than 180 degrees.

33. (Currently Amended) The combination of a vehicle and a loading apparatus, said vehicle having a storage area for transporting material, said vehicle including at least a pair of opposite wheel structures for movement on a support surface, each of said wheel structures having a rim with a tire mounted thereto, said rim having a top and bottom, said storage area having a portion with a bottom positioned at a height above said support surface and at about the top of said rims, said portion having a lower edge; and said loading apparatus being configured for loading a material into said storage area, said apparatus comprising:

a chute extending from the rear of said vehicle and extending substantially the width of said vehicle, said chute having a slide surface with a top edge positioned proximate the lower edge of said portion, said slide surface extending away from said lower edge downwardly toward a bottom edge of said chute spaced from said support surface to be at or below the rims of the wheel structures and below said top edge of said chute,

a receiving member ~~that is substantially planar~~ with a front edge attached to said bottom edge of said chute and with a rear edge spaced from said front edge a distance to define a loading area having opposite sides, said rear edge and said opposite sides being configured for loading said material onto said receiving area along said rear edge and said opposite sides, and said opposite sides and said rear edge being configured with a side rim to retain said material in said loading area;

a connector arrangement for pivotally connecting said chute to said vehicle at said lower edge; and,

operation means for moving said loading apparatus between a deployed position in which said apparatus extends away from said bottom with said receiving member disposed below said lower edge of said portion and generally in alignment and generally above said support surface and a transfer position in which said receiving member is raised sufficiently for the transfer of said material placed on the loading area onto said slide surface and toward said chute and toward said bottom, wherein said operation means includes a cable and a winch mechanism, said cable extending from said winch mechanism and attached to said receiving member, said winch mechanism being operable to wind in and pay out said cable to move said receiving member between said deployed position and said transfer position.

34. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 33, wherein said side rim of said opposite sides further comprises at least two side walls connected to and extending upward from said receiving member and having a height selected to retain said material in said loading area but less than about the top of said rim of said tire ~~configured to retain said material deposited on said loading area and~~ configured to guide said material deposited on said loading area towards said chute when said apparatus is moved from said deployed position to said transfer position.

35. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein said side walls have a height above said receiving member of no greater than about 6 inches.

36. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 33, wherein said side rim of said rear edge further comprises a retaining wall connected to and extending upward from said

rear edge of said receiving member, wherein said retaining wall has a height selected to retain said material in said loading area but less than about the top of said rim of said tirecand configured to retain said material on said loading area.

37. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 36, wherein said retaining wall has a height above said receiving member of no greater than about 6 inches.

38. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 33, further comprising at least two side walls connected to and extending upwardly from said chute, wherein said side walls connected to said chute are configured to guide said material from said loading area towards said storage area when said apparatus is in said transfer position.

39. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 33, wherein said loading area is a substantially planar platform disposed essentially horizontally above said support surface when said apparatus is in said deployed position.

40. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 33, wherein said receiving member makes no contact with said support surface.

41. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 33, wherein said receiving member and said chute are joined at an angle of greater than 90 degrees and less than 180 degrees.

42. (New) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said operation means includes a cable and a winch mechanism, said cable extending from said winch mechanism and attached to said receiving member, said winch mechanism being operable to wind in and pay out said cable to move said receiving member between said deployed position and said transfer position.

43. (New) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said operation means includes a cable and a winch mechanism, said cable extending from said winch mechanism and attached to said receiving member, said winch mechanism being operable to wind in and pay out said cable to move said receiving member between said deployed position and said transfer position.

44. (New) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein said planar platform has a contoured surface.

45. (New) The apparatus of claim 39, wherein said planar platform has a contoured surface.